Chris Nicholls

PHEASANTS AND FOXES

by G. R. Ellis

The SHOOTING TIMES

and Country Magazine

SEVENTY-THIRD YEAR | FRIDAY, JULY 1st, 1955 | 1s. 3d. WEEKLY

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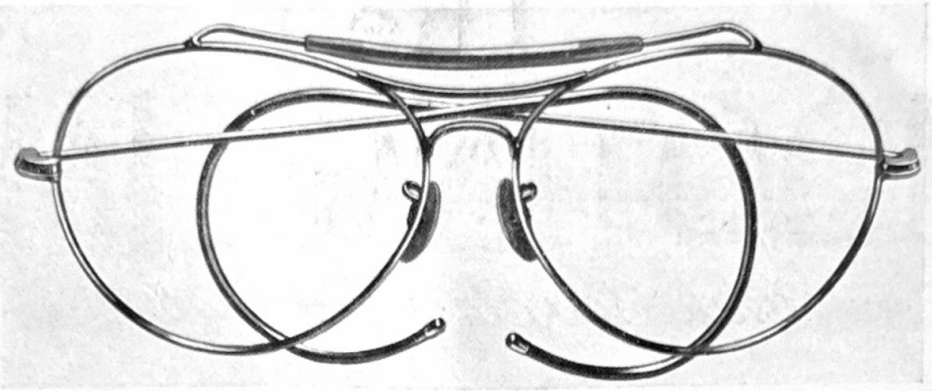

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

IT seems early to be writing of new guns and grouse shooting—in any event this sounds too good to be true these hard times. But new guns (and best ones, too) are being bought all the time and it is a fact that grouse shooting opens next month. Now, then, is the time to attend the shooting school (as distinct from clubs and competitions). Many men who can well afford it do not avail themselves of the practice and tuition which are so well provided at actual shooting schools.

It is not of course a cheap way of shooting. How could it be? Land in the vicinity of big cities is naturally expensive, and potentially, probably more expensive. And as suburban and built-up areas go, the amount of land needed for a fully-equipped shooting school is considerable. Moreover, the procurement of suitable land within easy reach of the centre of a large city is a task by itself, apart from the ever-present question of management and upkeep.

But those who can afford to go grouse shooting and to buy new guns for the occasion must, *ipso facto*, be sufficiently well-to-do to spend a few pounds on necessary practice and on how to make the most of a butt. And unless this is done, disappointment is sure to follow at a time when it is too late to take any remedial steps. The days of De Grey and Walsingham have unfortunately passed and the ever-necessary practice must be provided for in other ways. One of the ways of doing this—for some the only way—is to have a series of lessons at a shooting school.

Above all, shooting from a butt should be practised. Good shot though a man may be, if he is not accustomed to butt shooting he should have some practice at it before "zero" hour arrives. It may be that all he needs is "acclimatisation"—but that alone, or rather the lack of it, can mean the loss of many brace of grouse. If a man is used to shooting with a pair of guns and a loader, he may feel somewhat constricted in a butt.

However, the modern shooting school has much to offer. "Birds" may be shot at every angle and practice can be concentrated on those at which the shooter is weakest. The latter can keep on at just those "birds" until proficiency is attained. With an expert coach at hand, his faults will be detected and remedied. He can also "plate" his gun, test his cartridges and make sure of himself and his equipment. This is just what is required for a day of such sporting and social tradition as the Twelfth.

Shooting schools may be found near many centres of population. Any reader has only to get into touch with one of those advertised in this journal in order to secure for himself the service and practice required. If he is in real need of practice and is anticipating good grouse driving, he would be well advised to make his arrangements without delay. He should, too, "get to know" his new gun and fit himself for some first-class shooting.

* * *

NEW HOME FOR POLLUTION RESEARCH

The new buildings of the Water Pollution Research Laboratory at Stevenage, which were officially opened by Lord Salisbury on June 20, are a milestone in the long and arduous road towards pure rivers. Most anglers now realise the growing evils of pollution which are slowly killing their sport, but it is not enough even to make pollution illegal. Means have to be found to treat not only the well-known enemies, sewage and old industrial effluents, but also the wastes of many new processes. This is where the Water Pollution Research Laboratory does such valuable work in scientific investigation and advice. Since 1927 their work has been carried out at Watford and a number of branch laboratories; now all the sections are gathered together in a magnificent new building equipped with every modern facility. It is encouraging to know that they are working on two of the most serious problems of modern pollution: the effects of synthetic detergents and the radio-active effluent from nuclear stations.

SALMON INVESTIGATION

For some time it has been known that Japanese fishermen have been catching very considerable numbers of salmon in nets—said to be as much as three or four miles long—far out in the North Pacific Ocean. In the past, salmon have been caught in commercially profitable numbers only in estuarine waters, and a scientific expedition is being sent from Canada to try to find out the origin of the fish caught by the Japanese. The expedition has other scientific aims in connection with salmon, and the team will be carried in two vessels in which it hopes to track the path taken by salmon leaving the Skeena River for the sea. The scheme is organised by the newly-formed International North Pacific Fisheries Commission.

DAPPING THE MAY-FLY

It has been said in some quarters that the traditional Irish method of dapping a natural May-fly or a spent artificial on certain loughs is dying out, and that it was never largely practised. With this we disagree. The method is to use a long rod, a floss line, a fine cast and a fly. Choosing a suitable day for wind the fly is fished by raising the rod, allowing the wind to carry out the line and, by lowering the rod, to let the fly settle on the water. Reports coming from both Ulster and the Republic of Ireland show that the method is spreading to loughs where it was not formerly used and to some of the Scottish lochs. Two factors may have aided this development. One is the use of ordinary cotton floss line of suitable strength instead of the expensive silk floss attached to a fly line. The other is the availability of hooks into which a natural fly can be clipped without putting the hook into it. The short May-fly season is over, but in August and September there will be a revival of the method with the advent of crane-flies, more generally known as daddy-long-legs.

AN UNREGISTERED FIREARM

A youth who stole a revolver and ammunition from a Wallington home was showing it to friends when it went off. Fortunately, no one was hurt. But as a result, 80-year-old Percy William Longhurst, owner of the weapon, of Maldon Road, Wallington, went to Wallington magistrates' court. There he admitted having in his possession a revolver and 32 rounds of ammunition without a certificate. After being fined £2 and told that the revolver would be confiscated, Longhurst, a former special constable, said: "I should like the amount raised by confiscation to go to the police orphanage." Det.-sergeant Amos said the offence came to light when a youth who had been dealt with was charged with stealing the revolver and ammunition from Longhurst's home. In a statement, Longhurst told him he had had the revolver for 40 years. "I was a special constable in the 1914-18 war. I was on duty and bought the revolver for my protection. I have had it stowed away in my room ever since."

WITHOUT COMMENT

The following is a quotation from *Russell's Graphic Guide to the New Forest*. "The sport, as may be imagined, is not of the kind where one sits on a folding-stool (with a hamper of provisions and wine at one's elbow), while the beaters drive up flocks of tame pheasants. New Forest shooting is not of this degenerate sort. Every bird shot by the licensee is a tribute, not only to his marksmanship, but to his genuine knowledge of the habits of game and his patience and skill in stalking, as well as a tribute to his cheerful willingness to walk over miles upon miles of the roughest country for the chance of a single shot."

EPPING FOREST CASUALTIES

Unless motorists voluntarily impose a speed limit, the days of the herd of fallow deer in Epping Forest may actually be numbered. Between the wars the herd numbered about 180. Now estimates place the number at between 70 and 80, and it is still dwindling. Every evening deer cross the Epping and Loughton roads traversing the forest, and cars travelling at speed are often the cause of fatalities. At some seasons, when traffic is at its heaviest, a deer a week may be killed.

IMMUNITY TO MYXOMATOSIS?

It has been reported that some rabbits trapped at Upavon on the Wiltshire Downs, which is an area almost cleared of rabbits, were sent to the Ministry of Agriculture laboratories and found to be immune. They had been infected by the disease, but had recovered, and, it seems, have developed immunity.

The Menace With a Gun

by Tower-Bird

THIS is an article which I do not like writing. But it has to be written, if only in an attempt to put matters into their right perspective. It is an unpleasant article to write, because there are a not inconsiderable number of men and lads throughout these islands who, while they are ignorant of, or show no respect for the written and unwritten laws and rules of shooting as a sport, nevertheless derive both pleasure and profit in carrying a gun. Among their numbers are careless-of-anything young fellows and far older men whose only crimes may be a sturdy independent spirit and an honest ignorance of shooting laws.

This latter category, I am afraid, have their own code of behaviour as taught to them by *their* fathers, and any change in law is regarded by them (if it effects their interests) merely as so much "hooey." They have always shot duck from August 1 to March, and no new-fangled restrictions are going to change them at their age! If you are human and not too intolerant, you cannot be severe with these old diehards.

The former category — the careless-of-anything youths — set quite another and far more difficult problem, for they have full lives before them and their "anti-social" behaviour requires urgent and drastic checking. The type of young fellows I mean are those who are semi-illiterate, and to whom any explanation of sporting principles and the necessity for adhering to shooting laws means very little, or nothing. If they lived in towns, they would be members of some Teddy Boy gang, but, being country born and bred, and living on the edge of marshland, they gang up "for a bit of sport," and you will find them, particularly on Sunday mornings, roaming the saltings and isolated freshwater marshes with dogs and guns, and shooting duck, or almost anything else, all the year round.

The Only Possible Excuse

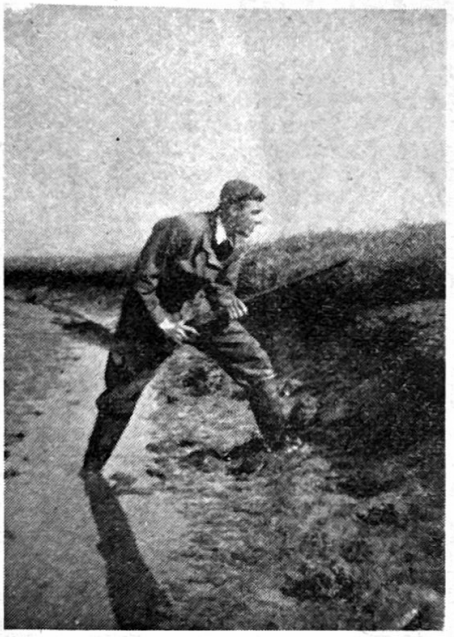
Readers of this journal, including your faithful scribe, are firm adherents of law and order, at least so far as the sport of shooting is concerned (!); at the same time, I think that we, whose roots lie deep in the soil, and therefore are instinctive "hunters," should, while rightly condemning law-breakers of any kind, ask ourselves in fairness: "Supposing that I had been brought up in this and that way, with no strict background or understanding of the higher principles of sport; how would I be reacting today? Let us all aid in the keeping of the law, but let us not be hypocrites or Pharisees!

Now, having made the only excuse that can be made for those less law-abiding than ourselves, I will proceed, paradoxically, to condemn them and see what can be done to preserve the life they destroy out of season, and by fair means or foul. I have before me a letter praising a former article of mine ("Sunday Fowling") from a reader in Dorset, and from this I would like to quote, for reasons that will become obvious. My correspondent writes:

"Your article was exactly what was required to bring people back to reality. Of course we must realise that if *any* shooting were put to the vote (of the general public. "T.B.") it would be turned down; how we can get round this is going to be the subject of much discussion in the not too distant future. We seem to be up against two main obstacles: one is the hard core of protectionist opinion, and the other the equally hard case of indiscriminate and thoroughlly unsportsmanlike shooters who do us more harm in an hour than the others do in a year! The protectionist we can, I believe, cope with, but the others I am not so sure about at all. No code of conduct can be enforced against them as I see it, and, short of making sport more expensive, and hence more difficult, I do not see how the matter can be got round.

"It is, of course, far too easy for people to get a 10s. gun licence and proceed to the slaughter of anything that flies. The old respect for game is almost gone, and certainly, in this part of England, the game laws are a dead letter. Partridges are regularly shot two at a time out of the cowshed window at all seasons of the year, while pheasants, during harvest, are reckoned as a fine target. Now, with no rabbits about, I dread to think of what will happen this year. . . ."

From the foregoing letter three great truths emerge. First: The police are far too busy with non-shooting crime, and their minds so



You will not see this keen young fowler out until September 1, the date for the opening of duck shooting.

clogged with a veritable "bird's-nest" of laws, rules, and regulations that it is impossible (or almost impossible) for them to keep track of, or to apply the law to a letter. Secondly: We are faced with a very strong, active protectionist element that is opposed to shooting as a sport. Thirdly: We have a very large number of gun-owners who, either lawless, or through ignorance, are a real menace to sport and its future. Let us glance at these three truths.

Aiding the Police

The police are certainly busy in these days, and the average village policeman (mobile, or otherwise) has so much on his mind that the welfare of birds and sport seems to him to be a matter of minor moment. This being the case, it is up to us, whose interests lie in ornithology and sport, to give him every aid when we know that the law is being broken. P.C.49, or his more stream-lined modern counterpart, may know little, for instance, about the new Bird Protection Act, but a copy of this Act will be found *somewhere* in the police station. Any wildfowler, therefore, and particularly any member of a wildfowling association, on having evidence that wildfowl are being killed out of season, or protected species are being shot, should institute a prosecution. He should go to his local police station, lay his charge, and point out the particular offence in a copy of the Act.

The trouble, as I see it today is that many workingmen gunners, good sportsmen and law-abiding men though they may be, do not like to "split" on offenders who, off the marsh or foreshore, may be their friends, or work at the same place. (Maybe, they would be sent to Coventry if they did!). Thus, we hear ("Wildfowling Clubs" of a recent issue) how duck shooting goes on all the year round at Poole Harbour, and I, myself, am fully aware that parties of lads are out shooting duck all the year through (especially on Sundays) round Chichester Harbour. It is the same story all round the coast. The answer is for local wildfowling associations to take action; to keep watch and institute proceedings against offenders. If they do not, then they must expect that their own members and associations will be blamed by protectionists and others for the crimes of roving parties of law-breakers. That a "human problem" is involved, I have said, but, if we are to preserve our good name and sport in general, action must be taken. I am surprised, too, that the more serious bird-watchers do not bring about more prosecutions instead of moaning about this indiscriminate shooting and out-of-season slaughter.

Establishing Mutual Understanding

Regarding those protectionists opposed to shooting, I believe that, by arranging meetings between representatives of their bodies and representatives of wildfowling associations a great deal can be done towards establishing mutual understanding. And I say this because our own local association and those who once opposed it in print and otherwise, are now, in the main, on the most friendly terms. This does not apply, of course, to rabid protectionists and bird-watchers, but more friendly relations will undoubtedly gradually be brought about as the true objects of fowling clubs become more apparent. Especially will this be the case if local clubs bring prosecutions against those breakers of the law.

The third truth which faces us, as my correspondent so rightly affirms, is the fact that there are far too many shooters about who kill game and wildfowl all the season through, and merely laugh at the law. I have already suggested how these may be dealt with, and the sooner a number of prosecutions take place all over the country, the better it will be. I think that members of wildfowling associations should do their best to reform many of the younger offenders, but I do not quite see how they can be brought into the strict confines of local clubs, for their applications for memberships would not be accepted. Here is a problem for W.A.G.B.I. to discuss.

What I do know is this: unless all this out-of-season, indiscrimate shooting is stopped, the future of our sport lies in serious jeopardy. More and still more wildfowling clubs and associations must come into being, so that the anti-shooting public will eventually be forced to the conclusion that properly organised sport, in an island becoming vastly over-populated, is not only a good thing for sportsmen, but of real benefit to the geese, duck, and waders which need active and reasonable conservation in the face of spreading civilisation.

A news item in most papers last week described how two fishermen in Pagham Harbour were rescued from drowning by a helicopter. One man was pulled to safety; the other scooped up in a net. By a strange coincidence, the man who was netted (poetic justice for any angler!) was said to bear my own name! My thanks are due to several correspondents who, believing me to be the netted man, wrote: "Why didn't they throw you back?"

Photographed by Messrs. C. & E. Bird—a knot sitting on her nest, in N.E. Greenland.

Some Knotty Points

by Sea-Pie

THE new Bird Protection Act, which came into force on December 1 last, has, on the whole, been received by the fowling fraternity with more equanimity than might have been expected. But there is one rather surprising item which is likely to have repercussions on the sport of the hardy shoreshooter.

It seems a little unnecessary to have placed on the protected list our old friend, the knot, that sporting and most abundant of all the wading tribe, so excellent a table bird and so well able to take care of itself. Why should the "poor man's partridge," as the knot was often designated, be excluded from the list of

Charles Godfrey Bird, who spent two winters in N.E. Greenland photographing the knot at its nest. He was killed in action at the Battle of the Java Sea.

"shootable beasts," such as common redshank, the two godwits, grey plover, curlew, and whimbrel, which according to the Act may be killed or taken outside the close season? Anyone who has watched the vast flocks of knot which gather in winter-time in some of the harbours from the Dornoch Firth in the north, to Pegwell Bay and Chichester in the south, can only echo "Why?"

The knot breeds so far up within the Arctic Circle that very few Englishmen have beheld the nest *in situ* A noted dish in some of our waterside taverns used to be "knot-pie." I remember, when the late Mrs. Bolton was landlady of the old George at Cley, that it was her custom to decorate the outside of the pie-crust with the long legs and feet of some of the knot, indicating that it was regarded as a delicacy, and the savoury dish included no redshank or grey plover.

One of the record shots ever made in Norfolk was during a winter in the 1890s on the Blacknock Sands between Blakeney harbour and Wells. Over 600 knot were picked up by three punt-gunners who fired simultaneously into a vast assemblage of these birds gathered on a rapidly making tide. That was 50 or more years ago. But I often heard old Tom Cringle of Wells who was one of the fowlers, relate the story.

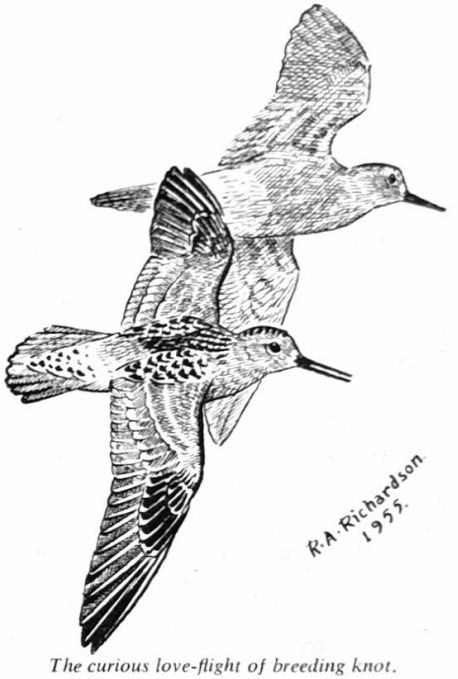
I gather from perusing the new Act that £5 is the extreme penalty for shooting a knot. One cannot help wondering what the brown-bearded Tom would have thought (and said) if he were politely informed that the day would surely come when such a feat of arms would stand him and his friends in for a technical penalty of some £3,000! There would certainly be a somewhat different ending to his yarn than the gleeful "fourpence apiece we got for them 'gnats' when we sent 'em up to Leadenhall."

Trials of Good Citizenship!

However, that is the law today, and like good citizens we shall examine very carefully each flock of wading birds on coastal mud-flats, and make sure there are no knot among the shank and grey plover, before we pull a trigger on a darkening winter's evening when the light is failing.

Two keen young friends of the present writer, Charles and Edward Bird, visited the east coast of Greenland in 1937 to study the breeding habits of the knot, which they knew so well as a winter visitor to our hospitable British shores. Some half-dozen nests of the knot were discovered, together with other exciting species which we only recognise as occasional vagrants. Charles, the elder brother, remained alone on that desolate coast throughout the ensuing winter, and pushing north at the earliest opportunity the following summer, discovered three more knots' nests in 1938, and took some remarkable photographs, one of which I am allowed to show here.

Somewhere both in north America and northern Europe the knot must nest in myriads, for we see the birds themselves wheeling over the tides and flats in flocks re-



The curious love-flight of breeding knot.

sembling at a distance clouds of smoke. European knot are said to be slightly different from their American cousins, and our own British visitors almost certainly come to us from far beyond the Arctic Circle in Siberia and the New Siberian Islands.

Were it not for that Iron Curtain, we should probably, with the help of helicopters, know more about the eggs of knot than we do at present. These do not seem to vary as much as eggs of most other waders. The ones which the Bird brothers brought home were not unlike a certain type of egg of the turnstone, and showed little variety.

The gallant Charles Bird went down on the Exeter in the Battle of Java Sea, and I am indebted to his brother for some interesting notes on the habits of the knot. As soon as the birds arrive on their breeding-grounds, the male indulges in the curios display, and what Edward Bird describes as a "breeding song." It ascends on rapidly-beating wings in wide circles, sometimes to a great height, uttering "flute-like notes." There are also "bleating cries," and sometimes two or three of these musical birds will be chasing each other at great altitudes.

The nests are usually a 100ft. or so above sea-level on ground almost destitute of vegetation. In some cases nests were found on completely barren ground covered with large stones. The birds sit very closely and both sexes are known to incubate. On being disturbed, a knot will feign injury for a distance of some 30 yards. Eggs were discovered at the beginning of June, and the first nestlings observed on July 9.

The sea area of Hochstetter Fiord is the home of many other interesting species, such

(Continued on next page, col. 3)

Gun Gossip

by North Country

THIS week I have a catalogue from Messrs. Charles Smith and Sons (Newark) Ltd., of Newark-on-Trent, Notts, and I am very glad to be able to add this publication to my library. This firm, better known as "Smiths of Newark," has been established well over 100 years, and it is still in the happy position of being a family business. The following is a quotation from the preface: "Our custom throughout these years has been built on what we have always believed to be the whole essence of family business, namely, our desire to introduce and maintain honest craftsmanship in all aspects of our work, also to give complete and satisfactory service to all our customers whether the job on hand be large or small. From the early days in our history we have been able to undertake a great variety of repair work to sporting guns. Rifles and fishing tackle at our factory here in Newark, and our range is always available for the benefit of our customers. In the Market Place proper, our shop is the regular meeting place of both young and old sportsmen, their requirements often ranging from the 'odd float' to being measured for one of our renowned ejector guns."

I am very glad indeed to see that this firm has seen fit to publish, immediately after the preface, those famous lines written by Mark Beaufoy, M.P., entitled *A Father's Advice* and beginning "If a sportsman true you'd be, listen carefully to me." The policy of "Safety First" should always be given pride of place. The more publicity given to those lines the better. Among weapons listed, illustrated and described are air rifles, .410 bolt action guns, .410 double folding guns, 12-bore single barrel guns, double hammerless ejector guns, double hammerless non-ejector guns, automatic guns, various revolvers and automatic pistols, single shot target pistols, etc. Opposite the pistol pages are, I am very glad to see, more safety rules.

Then there is a large range of rifles including some for the .22 Hornet cartridge, match rifles humane killers, air pistols and a really wide range of accessories, including of course cleaning implements. And it is expected that further pages will be added from time to time. This is a very useful catalogue and I am glad to be able to add it to my list.

Some of those windy days which we experienced in May and June made young rook shooting with a rifle a tricky, if not downright difficult business. Where young rooks have begun to learn the arts of self-preservation (which they soon do) or rabbits (where there are any) are extra sharp, a windy evening is certainly a help if you are out stalking with your miniature rifle—or for that matter, your gun. Unheard you can make your approach and get within what should be sure killing range. But I am never very fond of using a rifle in a wind. Moreover, if the evening is dull at the same time, shooting may become deceptive. I prefer the still, bright evenings. Besides, there is usually a larger number of suitable targets on bright, warm evenings. But I mention this because we have had our quota of such weather and more! I consider a rook, high up, perched on a swaying twig, is a test of good shooting. A satisfactory shot it is too—when you make a clean kill. Using a gun I have had many a rabbit in the wind. Noise is deadened and movement in a small way goes unnoticed. Perhaps we do not appreciate all these small things which go in our favour. All the same I do not like *windy* spring evenings for pottering about with a rifle, even though they offer certain advantages. Give me those bright, warm evenings when more potential quarry shows up and possibilities are made manifest.

When the crops are all cut and harvested and we can see our fields again, it will seem like being awakened to a new land—without any rabbits. Only the Highland keeper, who may or may not have rabbits on his moor, will be virtually unaffected. His grouse, etc., and for ground game, his blue hares, will keep him and his guests well occupied (at least we hope so). A rabbitless England this harvest will seem all wrong. And it is such bad luck for young shots who are now coming on and full of ideas for the future. I am one of those who believe that the rabbit will come back, but I realise the present has to be considered. A nasty gap has to be bridged. What indeed the French had to put up with a year or two ago is facing us today. It is a great set-back for retailers who relied on the demands of rabbit shooters for the major portion of their cartridge trade.

☆

THE PURCHASE OF SECOND-HAND SHOTGUNS

(Notes issued by the Guardians of the Birmingham Proof House)

The purchase of a second-hand shotgun involves somewhat similar risks to those incurred in buying a second-hand motor car, or an expensive second-hand watch. Each to a degree is the product of skilled craftsmen and in none is it a simple matter for the layman to detect every defect or weakness. To suggest that one should go to a reputable gunmaker or gunsmith and buy the best gun one can afford may be sound advice, but it is cold comfort to those who really cannot afford a good second-hand gun or to those who may be tempted to purchase a second-hand gun from an acquaintance, in the market place at an auction or sale room or at the local tavern. A few words of advice on the subject may be timely.

When contemplating the purchase or sale of a used gun, check must be made that the proof marks remain valid. Proof marks indicate the soundness of the gun when it was last proved, but the gun may have been so altered that it is unproved at law although the proof marks remain.

The incidence of purchase tax on new guns, added to their already high cost, has placed a premium on the better class of second-hand gun, so that there are many old guns being offered for sale which in more normal times would have been considered past further service. Where purchase is contemplated from sources other than reputable gunmakers, gunsmiths or dealers, it is suggested that the gun be submitted to a reputable gunmaker for a report on its condition prior to completion of the deal. Where difficulty is experienced in obtaining such a report, request may be made to one of the Proof Houses for advice as to whether the gun is or is not in fully proved condition. The Proof Houses should not be expected to advise as to mechanical condition, quality, or value.

A report of this nature is suggested and may be invaluable because a gun may have a number of faults not apparent to the inexpert eye.

An expert examination of the gun should determine:

1. Whether the gun has been nitro proved, bears the relative proof marks and is suitable for use with modern cartridges.

2. Whether the bores have been enlarged since the barrels were last proved.

3. Whether the barrels are in good condition generally; that is, free from rust, pitting, dents and bulges.

4. Whether the chambers have been altered to accept a longer case since the gun was last proved.

5. Whether the action is "off the face" of the barrels, or otherwise loose.

6. Whether the action is in good, safe working order.

7. Whether the gun patterns well at normal distances. This is not a matter affecting the safety of the gun or its state in proof, but is of importance to the prospective purchaser.

It is regrettably true that there are guns offered for sale by irresponsible persons which would not pass examination satisfactorily on any one of the several points enumerated above. Such a gun may well be unproved, unsafe, and fit only for use as a wall ornament.

The shooting public are given protection by the Gun Barrel Proof Acts of 1868 and 1950 under which it is an offence to offer for sale an unproved arm. Every shotgun must pass the proof test and bear proof marks, and where certain alterations have been effected since proof such as the opening out of the bore beyond defined limits to remove pitting, or the deepening of the chambers, the proof marks are rendered invalid, the gun becomes an unproved weapon, and must be submitted to a further proof test prior to sale.

The Proof Authorities and the Proof Houses were established for public security and one of their more important functions under the Proof Acts is to institute proceedings against offenders where the necessary evidence is put before them and is considered to justify such action. Proceedings have been instituted by one or other of the Proof Authorities on a number of occasions in recent years and in each case a substantial fine has been imposed. The offence in dealing in unproved arms is committed by the seller not by the purchaser.

Closer co-operation between the shooting public, gunmakers, and the Proof Authorities must result in a reduction of the risks involved in the purchase of second-hand shotguns from chance acquaintance, unscrupulous dealers, or misinformed friends.

Home Counties Wildfowlers' Association

The Home Counties Wildfowlers' Association are holding a clay pigeon shoot at the London Gun Club grounds at Northolt on July 2. See Clay Pigeon Shooting Fixture List on page 418 of this issue.

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Some Knotty Points

(Continued from previous page)

as Greenland falcons, snowy owls, king eider-duck and Sabine's gulls, which we only know as casual visitors to Britain. Edward Bird found Greenland falcons quite fearless of man. Over a hundred were shot as the great hawks are a nuisance on the autumn migration, perching in numbers on the masts of the wireless station at Myggbukta.

During the breeding season the adult female knot can be distinguished from her mate by dark arrow-shaped markings beneath the tail.

In old days the knot, which visit the east coast of England in their handsome chestnut-coloured plumage, were regarded as something of a prize by bird-collectors and gunners. I can remember when keen, amateur naturalists would rise before dawn in the month of May, when the wind was blowing from a favourable quarter, so as to be down on the harbour flats by 3 or 3.30 o'clock in the morning, by which time it was light enough to distinguish birds.

The late Mr. F. A. Fisher, of Wells in Norfolk, was one of the last gentleman-gunners to do this, and I must admit that, when a youngster, I myself had many an early expedition on the muds. It was a form of semi-scientific sport, which certainly possessed a charm of its own, and one had to know one's birds thoroughly. With the sun rising behind one it was a glorious sight to see the great stretch of gleaming flats with the distant line of hills and trees by Holkham Gap, and the line of red-roofed villages along the uplands.

If many waders were on the move, exciting stalks in pursuit of a particularly richly-plumaged knot, or grey plover were occasionally rewarded by securing a really desirable specimen. Of course, it was a technical infringement of the current protection Act, but 40 years or so ago nobody worried if a shot was heard in the harbour.

(Continued on opposite page, col. 3)

West Somerton Mill and the wild marshes beside the road that leads to Horsey.

A Shooting Paradise

(Concluded)

by J. Wentworth Day

WE squelched along the dyke-side, snipe springing at every step from a low, mown sedge-marsh. A quarter of a mile on, through a gap in the tall reeds on the right, one could see a flat, glittering little mere, walled with high reeds, dotted by shooting butts built of reeds and standing on stilts in the water. A fleet of duck—mallard, teal, wigeon and tufted duck—were scattered in large and small parties.

All round was the desolation of sighing reeds, endless acres of brown sedge, gleaming dykes that snaked away into the wilderness, with, at the end of one, two gunning-punts drawn up and tied to stakes. Here, on this remote fen, the late King loved to shoot, and many a morning of winter was he poled in a grey duck-punt down these dykes, out to the shooting-butts, by Browne or one of the marshmen, there to wait in the cold mist for the swift inrush of wings, the sudden splash and scutter of alighting duck.

We were white with snow from head to foot and drenched to the knees at the end of that three-mile walk through the lonely fens, where only duck flew and snow-whitened reeds soughed in the wind.

We came back by a flooded sedge-cutting to a grove of oaks, mantled with ivy, where pigeon roosted, and a barn-owl was quartering the stubbles beyond. There the marsh ended and the upland, light and loamy, begun. Great woods stood away to the left about South Walsham Hall. To the right, beyond a bare and windy slope of corn stubbles, stood the tall and beautiful tower of Ranworth church, and beyond that the dark umber mass of the Ranworth woods.

Artificial Insemination

Jermy was in his barn as I came by, a crowd of white ducks, geese, turkeys, and game-chickens clamouring about the door. On the flooded splashes of a little green marsh which lies between the barn and a broadside carr more flotillas of white duck paddled and swam.

We fell to talking of artificial insemination of cattle, the latest fad of the so-called "scientific advisers" who nowadays pester the farmer with every conceivable new nostrum. I had been into the whole matter thoroughly at the University Farm at Gravel Hill, Cambridge, where the scheme more or less originated, and was, frankly neither impressed nor converted. Jermy substantiated my disbelief.

"I've tried an artificially-bred bull," he said, "and he was no darned good. I had ten artificially-bred cows, and seven were barren. Surely that speaks for itself."

Back at the Staithe, Donald, looking more like Mr. Punch than ever, and fearfully nautical in blue jersey, reefer jacket, peaked cap, sea-boots, and blue naval stockings, was bustling about as though the departure of the Warspite was imminent.

So, as I disapprove of haste on inland waters, I rebutted all idle talk of "tides"—the rise and fall at Ranworth is a mere miserable six inches, but to hear some of the "mud-pilots" talk on Broadland waters one would imagine that the Severn bore was imminent — and stalked into Mr. Starling's portals for a valedictory pint.

What's my line? The author on his throne of antlers.

Result of Dredging

There he showed me a fine old dark-blue glass wine bottle, of the squat medieval shape, stamped "J. Poynter, 1782." "Dredged up out of the river just off the mouth of Ranworth Dyke," he said. "They get some funny things out of that river when they're dredging—things hundreds of years old. I've heard that they've found old sea-going boats before now, regular ships. After all, these marshes were an estuary of the sea one time, and ships came right up to this Staithe.

"Why, they found a smugglers' cave in the schoolyard some years ago. Barrels in it too, but nothing in the barrels. That's all blocked up now. So is the tunnel that runs from the church to St. Benet's Abbey. Leastways, some of the old chaps say there's a tunnel, but I can't see how those old monks ever dug one that far."

"I've heard about that tunnel," said I. "Wherever there's an old castle or an abbey, there's always a rumour of a tunnel going for miles. They were usually drains! They dug sewers even in the Middle Ages."

"Ah! I daresay," said Starling. "Sounds more like the truth. But how about the smugglers' cave?"

"Much more likely to be true. A lot of smuggling went on on the Broads up to a hundred years ago," I said. "Sidney Grapes's father used to say that their old family mill, Grapes's Mill, between Potter and the Dungeon, was stacked full of tobacco some nights in his father's time. They used to run the cargoes ashore at Horsey Gap and at Winterton and, then again, at the end of the old Holmes road on the Somerton Marshes. Plenty of those old mills were used for hiding staff. In fact, if the Preventive men left Yarmouth to search a mill at Horsey, the Horsey men knew within a quarter of an hour of the Preventive men leaving the town."

"How was that?"

"Because they set the sails of the mills dead upright—in a cross. One millman used to signal to another across miles of country—and I daresay your Ranworth chaps were as deep in it as anyone else."

"Ah! I dessay. Good old times them."

Some Knotty Points

(Continued from facing page)

When shooting on the muds in autumn, we commonly used imitation "dummies" carved out of wood and furnished with iron beaks and legs. The decoys when well painted and arranged head-to-wind were extremely realistic, and it was seldom a flock of passing knot could resist circling round and settling to them. The knot is, so far as I know, the only wader careful for the welfare of its lifeless companions. On being disturbed, and perceiving that their wooden friends did not accompany them, knots often returned whistling and trying to induce them to take wing.

No bird is more sociable than the knot. The late Mr. Booth recorded that on one occasion he tried a shot with his punt-gun into a mixed flock of waders on Breydon, and obtained specimens in larger or smaller numbers of ruffs, redshank, curlew-sandpipers, green-shank, spotted redshank and golden plover, in addition to a number of knot and dunlin. Well, the old-time specimen-hunters and collectors are gone, and the delicious knot-pies of the old George inn remain only in the memory of those who have tasted them.

Pheasants And Foxes

(In Retrospect)

by G. R. Ellis

THERE are probably more sportsmen, and for that matter sportswomen too, out and about in the British countryside during the Festive Season than at any other period in the sporting year. There are the Christmas family shoots; rough shooters; wildfowlers; pike fishermen and on Boxing Day the traditional meet of practically every pack in the country.

So far as the shooting man is concerned, big bags are not expected, as the coverts have by then been shot through. In any case, the Season of Goodwill, good food, yea and good drink is not conducive to an important occasion where host and keeper expect their teams of guns to be on top form, and unaffected by "spots before the eyes," or kindred liver complaints of over indulgence! No, Christmas shoots are more light - hearted, jolly affairs, with none of the tension of the "big day," or "first time through."

Thus, on Christmas Eve last, with the idea of getting an appetite for the forthcoming good fare, I took my two labradors down the small dell adjoining our garden, hoping to find a pheasant at home under the holly bush at the bottom. I can generally find a pheasant here, but on this occasion there was none at home. I then decided to walk the marshy strip at the bottom of the adjoining field. This marshy strip floods in winter to a depth of about six inches and often attracts mallard and the odd teal.

Despite the flood-water, the marsh is so thickly carpeted with dead bullrushes and clumps of marsh-grass, that it does afford dry quarters for both pheasant and rabbit. I have put up as many as half-a-dozen pheasants in this small strip, but today, although the dogs worked it through most thoroughly, it was blank of game. It was not until we had reached the far end that the dogs got a scent at all, and then they both "set" at a thick thorn bush on the boundary. I stood back, confident that I was going to get a shot after all.

The Big Dog Fox

At the command to "push 'em out," they dashed into the bush, but instead of a pheasant, out came a big dog fox. This proved too much for the labradors which immediately gave tongue and dashed away in full pursuit. Deaf to both whistle and shouts, they chased him a full two fields, giving me a fine view of my own private little hunt. It was some minutes before two very shame-faced and blown dogs decided to return to their master. As the local pack was meeting within half-a-mile of the house on Boxing Day, I felt this augured well for their sport.

Boxing Day dawned, and as I passed the meet on my way out to the shoot, spectators and early followers were already assembling. I wished them good hunting. The small rough shoot of some 300 acres which I rent had at first looked a good speculation. There was a nice, warm wood of some 10 acres, a small, overgrown marshy spinney, and first-class game holding hedges. Also a small river formed the one boundary. However, experience proved that game on the shoot was scarce, and from enquiries in the area the reason seemed plain. Adjoining the wood was common land, and in summer gypsies were in regular attendance on the Common, and doubtless their dogs roamed the woods at nesting time, to the detriment of the game stock. Nevertheless, it is a pleasant little shoot.

The party for the morning was to consist of a soldier friend and myself, and we were to be joined at lunch time by a third member. I had with me two labradors—old Simon, eleven years old, and his son, "Squib," a mere stripling of two. Now, really old Simon should not have been with us, as he had been "retired" twelve months ago, and in consequence had become a household pet with a subsequent increase in rations. As a result, his girth was enormous, and he waddled like an old duck. However, a better dog I never had for nose and courage. The old boy, of course, gets most upset when the young dog is taken out shooting and he is left behind, and on this morning my wife had said: "Do take the old chap with you, it will be a real Christmas present for him." Mumbling something about that it would probably give him a heart attack all that fat, but secretly delighted to take him out again, I agreed.

It was soon evident that they had found and we saw them leave the wood.

A Habit Which Pays Dividends

We moved off down the lane, I telling my army friend that I doubted whether we would get a pheasant for him to take back to the Mess. Now, I have developed a habit of always taking a good look at each field before entering it, a system that often pays dividends, as indeed it did on this occasion. Climbing cautiously up the hedgerow bank, I was just in time to spot two cock pheasants legging it for the far hedge. Despite our cautious approach, they had heard us, and if we had been making undue noise, they would have been off long before they did and we should not have seen them. As hedge they were making for was a good thick one, and furthermore I did not think they had seen us, I felt reasonably certain that they would stay put. The situation looked promising, and a whispered "O" Group quickly had a plan of campaign mapped out. My friend was to continue up the lane until he reached the intersecting hedge, and then to proceed quietly up this on the far side and post himself at the corner, where I thought the cocks would break out.

I waited until I saw him in position, and worked the two dogs up the nearside hedge to the corner and then turned right-handed, thus putting the pheasants between us. I had not proceeded very far before the old dog picked up the scent and pushed through to the far side like the cunning old chap he is. He was not going to flush them on the blind side. I was now having a few anxious moments with the young dog, which would persist in going out on the back-scent into the field. As a quiet approach was vital, I ignored him and hoped for the best, followed the old dog which was hot on the scent.

Two Pheasants Down

We were now within fifty yards of my friend and it was obvious we were going to get a shot, and thus it proved. Through a gap in the fence, I saw the old dog stop and stiffen with his tail straight out, and then out came the two cocks together—one over the top of the hedge on my side, and the other turning back on the blind side. A quick snap at the near one brought him down nearly on top of Squib who had come galloping in. A sharp about turn and I took a more or less blind shot at the other as it went back on the far side of the hedge. "You've hit him," my friend shouted, "and he's planed down on the other side of the road."

I was not in a position to see the result of the shot, but I was not very optimistic after the expression "planed down," as birds hit hard do not usually come down in this fashion. However, putting the dead bird in the bag, I decided to go and have a look. The hedges on the far side of the road were excellent cover, and if he was hit he would most likely sit tight. The first hedge we tried proved a blank, and then our attention was drawn by the frantic waving and pointing of a farmer who was lugging beet. From his semaphore signals it appeared the bird was in the far hedge, and as this hedge was on the boundary on two sides we would have to go cautiously if we were to put him in the bag legitimately.

A repeat of the previous manœuvre seemed the best way of going about it, so my friend proceeded to the intersecting boundary hedge, whilst I worked it up towards him. It was soon evident from the old dog that the cock had been that way, so signalling him to get through and keeping the youngster to heel, we moved quietly forward. Once again I was to get the shot as old Simon bundled him out and up he rocketted giving me an easy shot of which fortunately I took full advantage. After shooting driven game, it is so easy to miss these hedgerow birds, which rise with a clatter and look as big and slow as a bomber, but which in reality are rising very steeply, making it very easy to shoot below. Once again the young dog "in the slips," so to speak, had the honour of retrieving without having done anything to deserve it.

Motioning my companion to stay where he was we started again towards him. It was just as well we did, as the old dog flushed a hen which gave my friend a rather wide, crossing shot. He missed her clean with the first barrel, but as quick as lightning, and with just that extra little swing which a miss with the right sometimes gives one, fetched her crashing to the earth with the choke. I was definitely pleased with the way things were going, as I had hardly expected to get a single bird, let alone three. However, nothing more

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Watching the flight of a falcon from Swinside Fell.

Round the Game Preserves

by David Imrie

SEVERAL weeks ago I read in a local paper a short but delightful account of peregrine falcons. The anonymous writer had evidently got his knowledge from direct observation, and I would have awarded him full marks if he had not concluded with : " But why trap them ? " There had been no mention earlier in the article that peregrine falcons were being trapped anywhere ; so I felt that this was an example of what logicians call " begging the question." In other words, an implication was being made without preliminary proof to support it. A classic example of this device is : " Have you left off beating your wife ? Answer yes or no." Obviously the accused must convict himself of having beaten his wife at some time or another if he complies with this request, which is not according to British ideas of justice. We insist that proof must be supplied by the accuser.

My own evidence (no doubt of a negative kind) is that I have lived three-fifths of my time in a country where peregrines breed, but I have never known anyone, nor heard of anyone, who has trapped one of those magnificent birds of prey. Even in the days when keepers were numerous here, and traps were set at kills all the year round, the victim was never a peregrine ; so we must assume that the trapping of one is an event of extreme rarity. Furthermore, one can live, as I have done, within three miles of a regularly-used eyrie without seeing a peregrine falcon for months ; for those predators were not christened arbitrarily. They do peregrinate, and their peregrinations take them probably all over a hemisphere, although I cannot prove that from direct observation. In any case, they travel so far from their breeding eyries during the course of the year that they are not familiar objects anywhere. And when they are in residence at breeding time, they manage to avoid traps because they apparently take most of their kills to the eyrie. This is proved by the great numbers of pigeon rings that barytes miners used to find at the foot of a certain crag in this area.

Catching Haggards

It is possible, of course, that the writer of that article on peregrines was not hinting at gins when he spoke of trapping, but merely referring to some little-known method employed by falconers for catching " haggards " at a live pigeon bait. According to " Stonehenge " in " British Rural Sports," young falcons able to fly at quarry may be taken in bow-nets, although this byegone sporting author evidently had his doubts about this method, even when he maintains the contrary, namely : " The great difficulty lies in the habits of the tribe, which will seldom strike a bird on the ground ; but with patience, I have little doubt that the bow-net would succeed. In this way passage hawks, both of the long and short-winged birds, are caught on the Continent of Europe, and particularly on the heaths near Falconswaerd, in the autumn, as they pass southwards and to the east." My own opinion is that the patience of many people would be exhausted before they caught a peregrine in any sort of net.

Description of the Bow-Net

However, for the benefit of those optimists who wish to take up falconry with a " haggard " instead of a nestling (technically known as an " eyas " or " eyess ") I will condense " Stonehenge's " somewhat long-winded description of a bow-net. Here it is : The net consists of dark-green silk, about six feet square, attached to a bow of wood or metal, which is hinged at each extremity to pegs driven firmly into the ground, so that the whole trap can swing backwards and forwards freely like the handle of a bucket. The theory is that a man in concealment will pull the net over a falcon by means of a string when it attacks a live pigeon tethered within the compass of the bow. To warn the hidden falconer of his quarry's approach, a butcher-bird is also tethered somewhere near the hide ; and this arrangement allows the man to while away the hours in some sedentary occupation. But I must point out to optimists that this nonsense could only be practised abroad nowadays, otherwise the use of a live lure would bring them within the scope of the Protection of Birds Act, 1954, unless they escaped punishment under one of the Lunacy Acts !

But if the bow-net offers aspiring falconers a very remote chance of getting hold of a " haggard " during its passage towards foreign parts, another method advocated by Stonehenge offers, to our way of thinking, hardly any chance at all, namely : " Sometimes the passage-hawk is taken by large hand-nets similar in principle to the landing-nets used in fishing, but very much larger. With these the hawk is caught by the falconer, who is concealed near a pigeon tied by a string to his hand, and suffered occasionally to fly a short distance. The bird attracts the hawk who makes a swoop, and is dexterously caught by the falconer while his attention is thus fully engaged." This was written in 1855 by a sporting journalist who was presumably a person of some eminence in his day ; so we must assume that countrymen were more credulous then than they are now. Even a sparrowhawk, which will pounce on a tethered bird, would have to be suffering from advanced senile decay before it allowed itself to be caught in a man-handled landing-net ; for a normal one is usually so quick at the least hint of danger that a hidden shooter is often unable to get off his gun.

In Time of War

Therefore, I submit that the trapping of peregrine falcons by any means whatsoever is not a practicable undertaking ; anyone who believes otherwise is working on theories, not on real experience. During the war when those long-winged hawks (as they are known to falconers) were removed from the protected list on account of their depredations among valuable carrier pigeons, a man was appointed in this area to destroy them, and although I never was able to have a conversation with him, I know that he did not use either gin traps or nets. He concentrated solely on the eyries at nesting time, removing the clutches, and probably shooting the falcons when he got the chance. Even that was not easy ; for peregrines nest in some terrifying places.

Nevertheless, it is a difficult crag indeed that defeats the ruthless egg-collector, and I am sure that those interesting predators would be much more numerous if they were allowed some peace at nesting time. There are even people with maps on which every known eyrie is marked ; and when the season arrives, those sites are visited without delay. Apart from this check, the peregrine is well able to take care of itself. In 36 years of shooting I have only known of three that fell to the gun, and of that number two were shot accidentally for sparrowhawks, because they had, rather strangely, left the fells and moors for the hedgerows of the cultivated lands. The first unfortunate one lost its life when a mob of excited chaffinches drew a keeper's attention to an oak tree. As he approached, the falcon went off at the far side, and was brought down by a fluke shot through the branches. The second was hunting the opposite side of a neglected hedge from two keepers who were driving home hand-reared pheasants, and its presence was also revealed by excited songsters. It was shot as it swooped past a gap ; but not until the bird was retrieved did the men realise that they had unwittingly killed a peregrine. Incidentally, this one must have been prepared to pounce on anything by craft instead of speed. It was barely six feet above the ground when it was shot. It had come towards the keepers behind the hedge at the same height.

During the whole of the week following this regrettable incident the keepers had ample proof of the attachment that peregrine falcons have for each other when they are mated ; for the tiercel hung about the neighbourhood calling repeatedly. Not until he had satisfied himself that his spouse would not return did he clear off ; and if the keepers had been as bad as some so-called bird protectionists make them out to be they could have bagged him as well.

A Fowling Clergyman

Who invented a sports musket

by Frank A. King

WHILST the Swiss gun-maker Pauli and the Prussian locksmith Dreyze, under the protection of Napoleon Bonaparte, were working to produce a musket which could be loaded at the breech, a Scotsman had devised the principle which enabled Dreyze to perfect his weapon to be used in warfare. In Paris, under Prussia's foe, Dreyze was able to complete his experiments and return to Prussia, where he was offered every encouragement and every aid that State could provide.

How different was the treatment given by the British government of the period to the clergyman of Scotland who had invented what might be called the eye to the needle-gun. Treated with stubbornness and disrespect of every kind, it was not until (as in so many other cases) it was too late, that any substantial recognition of his discovery was offered to Dr. John Alexander Forsyth.

Born on December 28, 1768, in the manse of Belhevie, a parish on the east coast of Aberdeenshire, where his father was incumbent, Forsyth, from almost childhood, was destined to be a minister in the Church of Scotland. He graduated at King's College, Aberdeen, and, on completing his studies, was licensed as a preacher in 1791. His mother had died, and on the day of his licence his father died suddenly—probably at the Presbytery meeting called for the examination of John Alexander prior to his taking his ministerial vows.

So, at 22 years of age, Forsyth became head of the family and guardian of his two sisters. At the request of the parishioners he was presented to the living left vacant by the death of his father and began a ministry which lasted 52 years until he died, a bachelor, on June 11, 1843.

The Minister's Smiddy

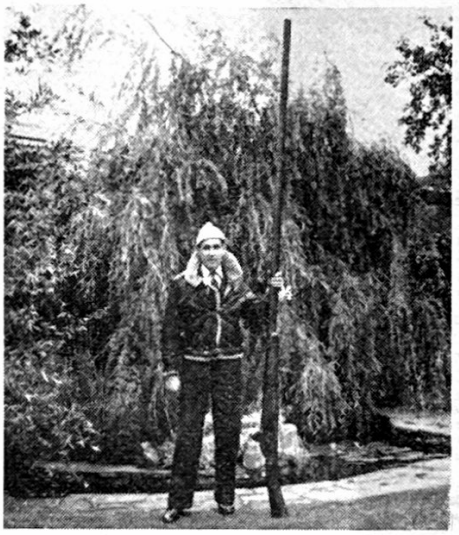
In the solitude of his country parish, the clergyman divided his time between his ministerial duties and the study of chemistry, mechanics, and natural history. Early in the day he would heat his crucible in the little garden house which was to be nicknamed "the minster's smiddy." His hobby was to make knives from ironstone. He was alive to all health developments and on the announcement of the principles of vaccination to prevent smallpox, he corresponded with Dr. Jenner to obtain further information on the inventor's method and regularly inoculated the children of his parish. He established a savings bank in the parish and served as cashier in order to encourage thrift.

In his day, trains drawn by steam were a great novelty, but there were no end to his conjectures concerning the power of steam, especially as applied to the development of railways. It was his firm conviction that, in his own generation, or soon afterwards, electricity would become as common a servant of mankind as gas and vapour had become in his own lifetime. As a boy he had shown considerable mechanical ingenuity, and he said later that his attention was first turned to the improvement of firearms in a very strange way.

Near the manse an extensive loch, now drained, which was frequented by plenty of wildfowl on which he exercised his sporting instincts when only a schoolboy. He noticed that the birds often escaped his bag by adroitly diving beneath the water as soon as the flash flared from his flint-locked fowling-piece. To obviate this defect, with logical skill, he erected over the lock of his musket, a hood with a sight along the barrel. This device, although clumsy and very elementary, produced the desired effect, by concealing the light caused by the ignited gunpowder in the pan of the lock, and the unheeding game fell victims to his good markmanship.

Later, when conversant with chemical compounds, his application of detonating powder in combination with his percussion lock may be said to be the development of this boyhood experiment. Up to the time when Dr. Forsyth produced his improvements the loading of firearms was very involved.

Preceding the flint-lock was the primitive match, held by the hand to the touch-hole, or



Ancient and modern—a fenland fowler of today.

by means of a clumsily-devised wheel revolving by a handle above the "pan" communicating with the touch-hole. This pan was filled with a fire-powder carried to a "touch box" and was called "priming." A piece of flint attached to a spring-hammer, falling against an iron guard to the pan, was the structure of the flint-lock of the early part of the nineteenth century, and the rival with which the percussion principle had to compete.

By the percussion principle, a single blow acted on a new species of inflammable powder and ignited the charge in the barrel; or, as it was described in an advertisement of the period:

"This lock is entirely different from the gun-lock. It produces inflammation by means of percussion, and supersedes the use of flints. Its principal advantages are the following. The rapid and complete inflammation of the whole charge of gunpowder in the chamber of the barrel. The prevention of the loss of force through the touch-hole. Perfect security against air or damp in the priming. No flash from the pan, and less risk of an accidental discharge of the piece than when the common lock is used."

Fresh Experiments

About 1793, when Forsyth was about 24 years of age, and only two years after he had commended his ministerial duties, when the French were unsuccessfully attempting to substitute chloride of potash for nitrate in gunpowder, the doctor was carrying out some chemical experiments and began to test whether any of the then known detonating compounds could be turned to a useful purpose by being substituted for the charge of gunpowder, or by mixing the compounds in the charge in varying proportions, or even by mixing the chemicals with the gunpowder when it was manufactured.

He found that, although by all these methods, greater inflammability and strength were gained, these advantages were counterbalanced by the increased dangers of compounding, carrying and using the mixtures, which caused him to abandon all hopes of improving the detonating compound.

He next attempted to increase the inflammability of the priming in the flint-locks, and found that the slightest spark of a flint ignited with detonating mercury or powder, made in chloride of potash. Unfortunately, the inflammation from the pan was not carried through the touch-hole to the charge of gunpowder in the barrel. Even when the gunpowder was mixed in the pan with a detonating powder, this compound was inflamed without acting on the gunpowder.

Application of Wadding

After resorting to various devices, he eventually employed a cylindrical piece of iron about 1½in. in diameter, with a hole bored down to its centre nearly 9in. deep, and ¼in. in diameter, with a touch-hole that did little more than admit a cambric needle, and a cup or pan on the outer end of the touch-hole made to contain a very small quantity of detonating powder. Some gunpowder was then put loose into the tube. In the small pan, the detonating powder was then kindled by a small stroke from a hammer.

Forsyth was disappointed to find that, although the gunpowder sometimes exploded, it was often thrown out without being ignited.

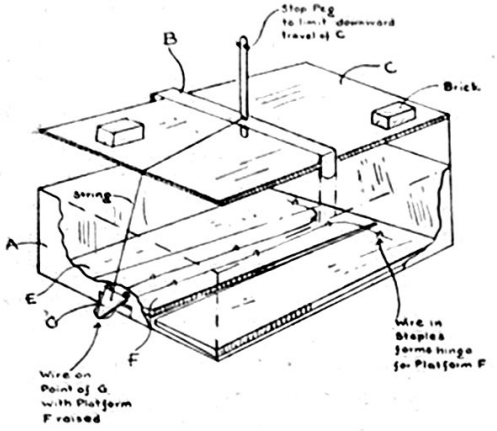
However, the application of a wadding, or even a light piece of paper above the gunpowder, overcame this obstacle, and ensured inflammation. The ignition of the charge of gunpowder by means of detonating powder was now completely effected, but it was necessary to construct a suitable lock.

Forsyth experimented with many contrivances until he made one in which the whole apparatus of the lock was contained within the barrel of the musket. The hammer was impelled on the detonating powder by a spiral spring, and the touch-hole was pierced through the breech in the direction of the bore of the barrel. By using the type of lock in which a heavy charge of shot was used, the existing form of gunlock, with certain alterations to the hammer and pan, served best.

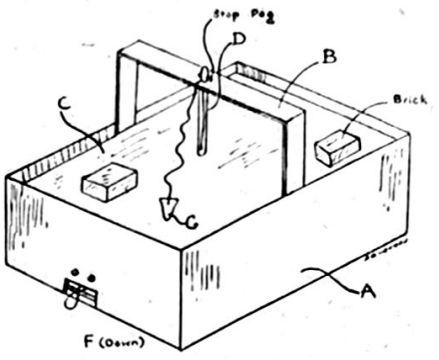
In 1805, Dr. Forsyth formed and affixed a lock to a fowling-piece which he used for shooting wildfowl in his parish during the season. In the spring of 1806, he went to London and happened to show it to some sporting friends. Lord Moira, then Master-General of Ordnance, saw this fowling-piece and was very interested in the principle of it. He sent for Dr. Forsyth and asked the clergyman to make some experiments in the Tower of London. These tests succeeded better than was anticipated, and Lord Moira insisted upon Forsyth remaining for a long period to carry out additional experiments. Forsyth consented after Lord Moira had obtained for him leave of absence from his parochial duties and a deputy had been engaged.

Forsyth diligently applied himself to his task to construct a lock which would inflame

(Continued on page 418, col. 2)



1. TRAP SET



2. TRAP "SPRUNG"

The Young Shot

Are You Guilty?

by Petrel

"YOU look," I said to my long-faced, sullen companion, "as if you have a chip on your shoulder. In fact, so surly is your mien that I would go further, and say that on your broad back you bear a veritable log of lugubriousness. What is it that distorts your normally placid and cheerful countenance? Did your horse lose, or your dog die, or have you been cast out from home without the proverbial shilling?"

"I have indeed been cast out," came the reply, "but not from home. There I am welcome still, but what is the use of that? At home there is no shooting. I have, these past few days, been seeking somewhere where my dog and I may both indulge our interests, but nowhere have we met with anything but sympathetic, and sometimes not so sympathetic refusal. And all this in spite of what I read in your most excellent journal about how easy it is to find some sort of shooting, and what a good fellow the average landlord is."

"Perhaps you should have left your hound at home," I answered, feebly parrying this salient thrust. "From what I know he is only young and no paragon. Maybe the harmless interest he evinced in the cattle and poultry was not construed as such."

"The hound is blameless," came the strong denial. "Whatever his faults, he is at least steady to livestock, and anyway, I believe that when applying for leave to shoot it often pays to show that you have a working dog, as not only does it emphasise your keenness and ability, but also that you are less likely to leave dead or wounded birds unpicked. No, the fault is not the dog's, it seems to be mine—or not exactly mine, but the fault of some of my fellow sportsmen. The attitude seems to be that there are too many people running loose with guns, and that things are not the same as they were in the days of the 'young gentlemen'."

"So you have to be a gentleman before you can get any shooting?" I queried.

"Of course you have. I don't mean you've got to have a coat of arms stamped on your cartridge bag, or have your name in one of those books. If you're a sportsman you've got to be a gentleman for basically they are one and the same thing."

"What, then, would you say are the qualities necessary to qualify for this joint title," I asked.

The answer followed quick and pat. "Consideration for others, obeyance of the shooting laws, written and unwritten. Politeness, of course, and moderation—not greed."

Obviously my friend had given the matter some thought, and had also referred to his dictionary.

Well, do you qualify? Do you shoot for the sport and the pot, enough for your own needs and no more, and only game which is (a) legal quarry and (b) retrievable and useful? Or do you shoot just for the sake of killing something, like Mr. Finch whose skylark crime was reported in last week's issue, or after the manner of certain self-styled wildfowlers, who last season, to relieve their frustration after an unsuccessful "goosing" foray, browned flocks of small waders regardless and ignorant of their identity, or of the law?

Do you know the new Protection of Birds Act, and how it affects the coming duck-shooting season, and what is even more important, whatever your insular views and convictions, are you prepared to observe it to the letter for the benefit of your fellow shooters or are you going to be a "clever Dick," to the jeopardy of all wildfowling?

Do you realise your responsibility to the farmer or landowner by whose leave you shoot? In the last month I have seen thousands of acres of moor and forest destroyed by fire, cattle straying through unshut gates, flattened tracks criss-crossing hay fields, a horse cut on the wire of a tumbledown hide and one "peppered" bullock. I also watched a car stop in the middle of a peaceful hamlet on a sleepy Sunday afternoon, and the occupant issued forth with a rifle which he proceeded to "sight in" along a trout stream to the extreme danger and discomfort of anglers and passers-by. When questioned, his only reply was that he had permission to shoot there, and that, apparently, was good enough for him.

The tragedy is that half the misdemeanours committed in the shooting field are not wilful, but the result of thoughtlessness and ignorance, and while I realise that personal instruction in such matters is not always practical or possible nowadays, it always surprises me that a man who may be a model of good conduct in some competitive and rule-bound sport can be so irresponsible and anti-social when the only referee is his own conscience.

Too many rules and restrictions kill any sport. The supreme penalty for a foul in the shooting field is, unfortunately, not always paid by the culprit, as my companion discovered. If you cannot get any shooting, blame the black sheep in your flock, but first make quite certain that you have no call to blame yourself.

Young Shooters' Competition

A chance for young shots to improve their shooting, put in some useful pre-season practice and win a silver cup or other prizes is offered during July, August and September. Messrs. Holland and Holland are running what I believe to be the first competition of its kind for young shooters (boys and girls) under 19 years of age, at the Badminton Shooting Grounds, Northwood. For an entry fee of 25s. you can go to the ground at any time between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. from Mondays to Fridays (inclusive) and shoot at 50 clay birds comprising 10 driven grouse, 10 partridges over the hedge, 10 pheasants from the 60ft. tower, ten 90ft. rocketing pheasants and ten walked-up birds including two doubles. Holland and Holland Ltd., 98 New Bond Street, London,

(Continued on page 418, col. 2)

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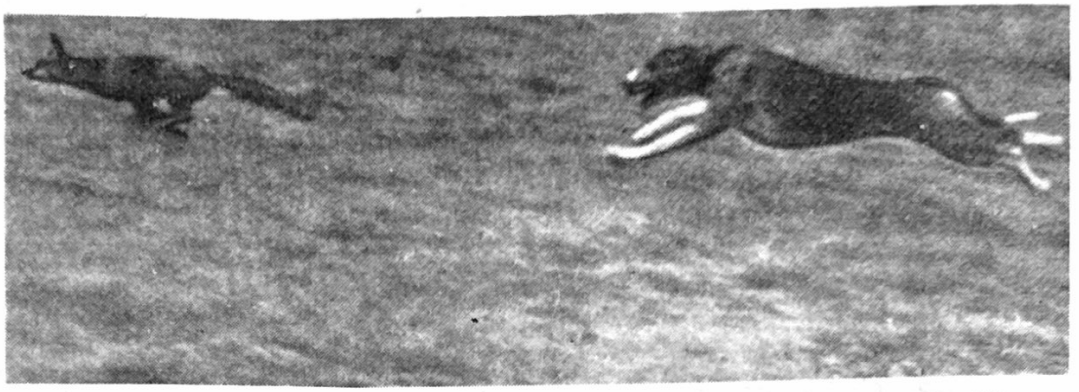
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor welcomes letters, and photographs relating to them, for this page. They should be as brief as possible, and the names and addresses of senders must be given, though these need not necessarily be published.



A remarkable snapshot of a fox and leading hound flashing past the photographer. (See letter "Speed.")

PIGEON SHOOTING

Sir,—Your correspondent Mr. W. Featherby may be correct about pigeon doing little harm in his district, but that is certainly not the case here. In recent years an ever increasing quantity of canning peas is grown, and every farmer complains about the pigeon. Fields are plastered with flags, etc., and some have "bangers." One farmer last summer employed two lads in two reliefs, to scare the pigeon off.

Pigeon start on the peas directly the latter begin to grow. Although I have permission to shoot pigeon on several farms, it takes most of my time scouting round to find which farm or field the pigeon are using. Pigeon seem to have a preference for certain varities of peas, which explains no doubt why some fields are seldom visited.

An interesting point is that canning peas can apparently be grown on the same field two, if not three, years in succession. Unlike harvest peas which remain on the field some time after being cut, canning peas are cut and carted straight away.

F. M. Boyce,
Suffolk.

HISTORY OF GROUSE SHOOTING

Sir, — May I quote Mr. Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald's actual words as printed in his "British Game," page 24, and first published in 1946? He says: "The history of grouse-shooting is a short one. A hundred years ago there was no regular grouse-shooting season. Grouse were shot, of course — generally over dogs, though there was driving on Horsley Moor as early as 1803—but grouse-shooting as a sport that attracted high renteals did not commence till the advent of the breechloader and the railway. Lang gave the shooting world the breechloader in 1853, and at that date grouse shooting may properly be said to commence."

I am afraid I took this statement too literally, as meaning there was no grouse shooting season as fixed by law; and I failed to realise that the time of which Mr. Vesey-Fitzgerald was writing, was subsequent to 1831, when the Game Act came into force. And this in spite of the fact that I had devoted a chapter of my book "Come and Shoot," to the legislation which covers close seasons, poaching, occupier rights, licences, etc. Evidently Mr. Vesey-Fitzgerald merely intended to show that the season came and went without much notice being taken of it, and it was not the notable event it became, when railways made the moors accessible, and breechloaders were available.

"Woodman" is, of course, quite right, and I thank him for drawing attention to a mistake I ought not to have made.

Henry Fletcher,
Herts.

A TIGHT-SITTING PHEASANT

Sir,—I am enclosing a cutting from the *Children's Newspaper* (June 4) which I thought might interest you.

D. Tirker,
Bradshaw, Yorks.

[Thank you for the cutting, printed below.—Ed.]

When a Lincoln bomber made a forced landing across the main Scunthorpe-Lincoln road and was abandoned by the crew, a crash tender eventually arrived to dismantle the aircraft and open up the obstructed road again. It was then that a pheasant was found sitting on 13 eggs under a wing of the plane and refusing to move. At last she was persuaded to fly off, and the eggs were cared for by a gamekeeper.

PIGEON AND CARTRIDGES

Sir,—I read with interest "Tower-Bird's" article under the above title in which he mentions would-be pigeon shooters and their surprise at being unable to get any shooting, and they more or less blaming the farmers for it. I act as pigeon and rabbit destroyer in my district and also deal with any pests from mice and sparrows to foxes when requested to do so, and, needless to say, I get far more shooting than I can possibly cope with. And yet I have been badly let down five times through allowing other shooters a little sport. I go on five keepered estates and numerous farms, and am never questioned for the simple reason that I take great care not to put a foot wrong.

A few years ago, a man I know very well asked if he could go pigeon shooting one Saturday. After telling him where to go, and that it must be pigeon only, I left him to it. To my surprise, he took his brothers and son and left them pigeon shooting while he went rabbit shooting.

In another instance I allowed a couple of fellows to go and shoot some young rooks, and they, too, finished the evening on the next farm rabbit shooting.

On still another occasion, I found a fellow some pigeon shooting on laid corn, but a hare went into the bag.

Again, I told a shooter he could shoot pigeon in a small wood in which was a good flight pond, but next morning a mallard lay dead on the water which no doubt he could not get off without a dog.

The fifth "let down" I had was when I told a shooter he could shoot pigeon in a fir plantation and the keeper, thinking it was me, went to have a chat, but on seeing a stranger asked to look in his bag and there was a pheasant.

I let all five shooters go in good faith, and knew very well that if any one was questioned and they said I had given permission everything would be all right. Now I have to refuse everybody.

Please do not think that I am condemning other shooters. I am only letting you know my own experiences, and it might help prove why farmers are dubious of pigeon shooters.

G. S. Hall,
King's Bromley,
Burton-on-Trent.

SPEED

Sir,—Some considerable time ago I was fortunate enough to obtain this thrilling example of speed near Kidderminster, Worcester. It was a cubhunting meet of the Albrighton-Woodland Foxhounds.

This fox and the leading hound of the pack, close behind him, flashed by at great speed.

The fox is running with ears cocked because he is looking for an opening between a number of excited foot-followers. As the thrilling hunt reached its climax, Reynard dashed through and saved his brush.

A. Kay,
Bearwood, Birmingham.

RECORDING OF CLAY PIGEON SHOOT

Sir,—I thought that an item of news which might interest clay pigeon shooters, is the fact that I have been successful in getting the B.B.C. to send along a recording car to the Open Sporting Competition and the Worcestershire Championship Down-The-Line Event, which the Birmingham Gun Club are holding on July 2. Interviews will be recorded with some of the competitors taking part; also comments will be made on the shooting and clay pigeon sport in general. Approximate time being allowed by the B.B.C. will be five minutes. The recording will be broadcast in a programme about a week later.

As some of your readers may be coming along to compete in the Open Sporting Competition, I thought they might be interested to hear of the

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arrangements. The recording will be made somewhere round about 11.30 a.m. I stand to be corrected, when I say this is the first clay pigeon shooting competition in the Midlands to interest the B.B.C. sufficiently to send along a recording car, with a view to broadcast, and naturally I am hoping that it will be a big success.

For the information of your readers, the shooting ground used by the Birmingham Gun Club is approximately 15 miles south-west of Birmingham and equal distance between Redditch and Bromsgrove.

A. E. JOHNSON,
(Secretary The Birmingham Gun Club), 33 Alcester Street, Redditch.

SHOOTING IN TRIPOLI

Sir, — When a question arises and advice is needed on a shooting matter, my obvious conclusion is to make my first attempt at writing a letter to the Editor of the "Shooting Times," a journal which surely makes everyone, myself included, oblivious of everything and everyone once my eager hand clutches it.

My problem? I am a sapper due to be posted to Tripoli, and as shooting is my "passion," I wonder if one of my fellow readers could enlighten me on the posssibility of some sport in or around the aforementioned district?

Also, what problems or formalities must be got through to take a firearm, namely my 12-bore hammer gun, out of this country, into another? Finally, would I encounter a cartridge purchasing problem?

I have, by the way, at least five weeks before my embarkation, which I hope is ample time to pursue my "cause."

G. MORGAN,
2 Wood Street, Cwincam, Mon.

THE TORTWORTH CHESTNUT

Sir,—The fine collection of conifers at Tortworth Court, in Gloucestershire, is not readily accessible to the public, since the place is now famous for another reason—as England's chief "open" prison. The post-war decision to make permanent the requisitioning of Tortworth was a great grief to the late Lord Ducie, though his main address was in Queensland, Australia.

However, the most renowned of all Tortworth trees, the Tortworth chestnut commonly said to have been a boundary mark in King Stephen's reign, can still be seen, for it stands not by the Court but in the park-like field next to the church. Much of the central part of this veteran is quite dead but branches have layered, and there are now (in effect) substantial and vigorous young trees growing up round the ancient hulk—to which they are still attached.

Incidentally, the Tortworth chestnut is one of the two most noteworthy exceptions to the general rule, that English trees famed for their antiquity are either yews or oaks. The other is also a sweet or Spanish chestnut—the vast tree at Canford in Dorset, sometimes said (quite wrongly) to be mentioned in the Domesday Book.

J.D.W.,
London, S.W.2.

DISTRESS CALL FOR WILDFOWLERS

Sir,—We wish to thank *The Shooting Times* for its kind co-operation in helping us to find a distress call for wildfowlers, and to all the readers who have shown such a great interest in the idea. A coloured very light 12-bore cartridge, and a whistle to be used when visibility is poor, would be the best answer to our problem. One very important thing is that no person must be allowed to misuse the signal. A fine could be made for improper use.

Mr. B. Powell does not seem to like the idea. Part of his article was interesting, but experienced as he might be, he is still not immune from accident. I might add this idea for a national distress signal was not thought up by some novice. In this club, we have fowlers with years of experience at the game and far from being novices.

The member of our club who broke his leg on the marsh tells me only a superman could have got off the marsh that night without help. It would have saved him much distress and discomfort if we had a distress signal then. He was only rescued in the nick of time before the flood tide. He is also without doubt a very experienced wildfowler.

This club thinks we should have a distress call for The Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland.

F. W. MALT,
Secretary The King's Lynn and West Norfolk W.A., 52 London Road, King's Lynn, Norfolk.

MYXOMATOSIS

Sir,—In reply to Mr. Prothero's letter in last week's issue, I should like to comment on the return of myxomatosis. Last Christmas I watched with disgust as the foul disease swept through the Hertfordshire countryside. But, to my surprise and delight, I found that at a "certain spot" rabbits had survived.

Taking daily strolls to this "certain spot," I counted more than a dozen rabbits (and later with some young) all within a quarter of a mile. But sadly I regret to say that I came upon this June a diseased rabbit which I promptly killed hoping it was the only one in the area. Myxomatosis had returned after six months' absence.

Being a new, and a youthful reader of *The Shooting Times*, I should like to congratulate you on a fine sporting journal, the articles of which are full of interesting points and advice.

BARRY C. DARSLEY,
Hunton Bridge, Hertfordshire.

One of the two most noteworthy exceptions to the general rule that only yews and oaks are famed in England for their antiquity. (See letter "The Tortworth Chestnut.")

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Gundog News

Conducted by P. R. A. MOXON, Herne Common, Herne Bay, Kent

MOST of us from time to time long for "the good old days," and this is especially the case with the shooting man. Whether the "old days" *were* good in every sense of the term is not the point, but they certainly were far better as regards sport and shooting in particular. But when talking to members of the "old brigade"—men who shot and trained dogs fifty or more years ago—I realise how much easier things must have been in their time. More game, more cover, fewer built-up areas, and, above all, ample time for shooting and training during the season.

Life was carried on in a much more leisurely fashion in those days, and the "joys" of the internal combustion engine, hydrogen bombs and many other delights of civilisation were unknown. If you wanted to go for a day's shooting to a neighbouring farm, you got up early and saddled or harnessed the mare, as the case might be, and you took along a variety of gundogs, knowing full well that there would be work for all of them (in relays) throughout the day.

Nowadays, the member of a syndicate shoot had to get up even earlier, drive anything up to a hundred miles along crowded roads and arrives at his destination with jangled nerves and strained muscles. He wonders if there will be enough game distributed at the end of the day to warrant the trouble and expense of it all, and doubts if it will be worth while taking Bess along as well as Rover, because last week his dogs only had three retrieves between them. This may sound exaggerated, but I know full well that it is true in many cases.

Another astonishing and, I think, very sad fact is that in many syndicates the members hardly know each other and in all probability do not even like what they do know of each other. How anyone can enjoy a day's shooting under such conditions seems strange to those of us who live in the country and get quite a bit of sport locally, and in congenial company at that, but, as a friend once said, in order to be able to afford to shoot at all he has to live in a city, work like a nigger five days a week, and pay through the nose for what little sport he obtains.

Higher Standard of Dog Work

These thoughts may appear to have little or nothing to do with my specific subject, but the point I wish to emphasise is that the standard of dog work seen today is, in the opinion of many who should know, as high or even higher than it was fifty years ago. There is no doubt that, with the possible exception of bird-dog trials—the work seen at field trials today is of an immensely higher standard than it was when they first commenced. I do not suppose for one moment that the dogs are better game-finders, but they are certainly under far better control and easier to handle, and they work with a brilliance and style which was absent in the old days. The modern dog would undoubtedly equal or even better the game-finding ability of the old "top dogs" were conditions the same as regards the amount of game and time available for training. All this is probably due to the much more general interest being taken in gundogs and their training, and to the more enlightened and (if you like) "psychological" methods of training employed at the present time.

Think what we could do today given the same opportunities. An old correspondent, F.C.B. (Gravesend) writes: "Fifty years ago, when I was 25, I had shooting over two thousand acres of marshland and arable in the Medway area. I well remember one day just after the turn of the century (I have confirmed the figures from my old game book) when with my friend J.E. and the keeper we accounted for 22 brace of partridges, 41 hares, seven mallard, 11 teal and 17 rabbits in a single day. I was at that time training Tiger, a badly mis-named pointer (he was as meek as a lamb!), and as I was trying to steady him to hares you can imagine I was not concentrating on my shooting entirely. Tiger was worked all the morning and pointed staunchly every covey he winded, but hares he would course and, with whip and long check cord, I steadied him so well that by the end of the day he would look the other way whenever a hare was sighted or winded!

Four labradors on the drop and waiting to be called up.

"We were working in rough, marshy grass most of the time, with an occasional root field and long stubble, and game was really abundant. J.E's curly retriever did most of the retrieving, but he was wild and had to be tethered to his master's side until required to go into action. The keeper had a wild spaniel which was never in the same field as us, but this dog performed nobly on the duck at evening flight, and picked up several which fell at great distances, winged or towered. We shot so much game that we made *caches* of it at various points along the outward journey, and the keeper went back and made arrangements for the farmer to send a cart out to collect it early the following morning. This was the best day's sport I remember (it was mid-October), and I often think that if game was as plentiful and sat so tight now, you people could make much more of your dogs than you do.

Honest Criticism

"I have seen one pointer and setter trial—the K.C. Championship—in recent years, and not one dog could have held a candle to my Tiger as regards finding game or staunchness on point. On the other hand, I have seen several retriever trials locally (one was a U.G.S. stake in which you were competing near here) and I marvelled at the control and the efficiency of the retrievers, and especially at their steadiness at stands. I wish dear old J.E. had been alive and with me on these occasions, for I would dearly have loved to pull his leg about his old curly Jet, mentioned above, who though a splendid gamefinder was as wild as a hawk and spoiled many a shot by running-in and chasing. . . ."

Old Days and Opportunities

Such interesting letters make my mouth water, and as I walk round an almost rabbitless and partridge-scarce shoot I think of the old old days and the opportunities which existed for training dogs. What field trials we could hold if conditions were the same now, and what dogs we should see in action. By the same post as the above letter came one from a schoolboy reader, C.B. (Stockport), about his border collie. "My dog, just under a year old, will hunt and point rabbits as well as any spaniel," he writes. "All the time a rabbit remains still he will hold a point, and the moment it moves he pounces. Sometimes he catches them and immediately kills them with one bite, but more often than not he will just miss them and chase for miles! Although I have not yet got this dog to retrieve, he will find dead stuff and stay with it until I come up, but this is annoying in thick cover for it takes me a long time to find dog or rabbit. I am trying to teach him to carry by the 'force' method, and will let you know if I have any success. It seems strange to me that a non-gundog breed should point so well (foreleg raised and all that), and would be interested to know if this is usual with border collies?"

Many breeds of dog will "flash point" still game when scented, and as I mentioned in my last article, many non-pointing dogs can be induced to do so by judicious use of lead or check cord in a pen with a rabbit or game bird. I recently had a border collie in for obedience training, and this dog would point in the rabbit pen when on the lead, as can be seen in the photograph. Most of this breed are natural hunters, but they are also killers, and anything that moves has to be chased. If you think of the work for which border collies are normally bred and used, this is quite understandable. They have great pace and courage in cover, and I like the breed immensely. Indeed, were I to have a companion dog other than a gundog I should choose a border, for they are intelligent, extremely easy to train and, providing they are handled intelligently and tactfully, reliable with children and other animals.

I am frequently asked whether I train my dogs singly or in groups—this question, naturally, coming from people completely ignorant of the technique of dog training. I reply that whereas all gundogs must go through a course of "solo" training, it is possible to do quite a lot of "mass training" once obedience is well established. I will deal with this question in next week's issue.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Fixture List

July 2: Home Counties Wildfowlers' Association shoot at London G.C. ground, Ruislip Road, Northolt, Middlesex, starting at 1.30. Includes D.-T.-L. Competition for members; Open Competition for members and friends; Skeet Competition for members. Trophy for the last competition is the St. Hubert Cup, offered by the St. Hubert Club of England.

July 2: Birmingham G.C. Open Sporting Competitions. Worcestershire Down-the-Line Championship.

July 2: Lincolnshire Sporting Championship, West Pinchbeck G.C., near Spalding.

July 2: Taunton and Dist. G.C., Somerset. Open Shoot.

July 3: Harrogate G.C., Yorks. Members' Shoot, 1.45 p.m.

July 4 to 16: National Rifle Association's 86th Annual Imperial Meeting, Bisley Camp, Brookwood, Woking, Surrey. Daily Clay Pigeon Shooting events and practice (except Sunday, July 10).

July 6: Bowland and Dist. G.C., Sawley, Clitheroe. Evening practice.

July 6: Birmingham G.C. Practice night, members only.

July 6: Droitwich G.C., Hanbury Wharf. Members' Shoot.

* * *

Reports and Results

London Gun Club. The club staged the London-Middlesex Skeet Championship, over 40 birds, and shooting took place in a high and blustering wind, making birds erratic and difficult. A highlight of the day was the exceptionally fine shooting of that veteran sportsman, Frank Moore, who won the London and Middlesex Skeet Championship Shield and Medal, kindly presented by I.C.I. Ltd. He also won the London Gun Club Perpetual Challenge Cup which goes to highest scorer.

Results of London Club open event and other winners are as follows: F. T. Moore, 38 x 40. Runner up prize in the L. and M. Championship (added by club): A. Vergotts, 30x40. Novice Tankard, presened by I.C.I. Ltd.: A. E. Newman, 26x40. London Gun Club Open Event—Class A: 1, F. T. Moore, 38x40; 2, N. H. Cook, 34x40; 3, A. Vergottis, 34x40. Class B: 1, L. H. Willis, 33x40; 2, J. Reynolds, 32x40; 3, G. E. Woodford, 29x40. Class C: 1, A. E. Newman, 26x40; 2, Mrs. M. Kidwill, 23x40; 3, N. Johnson, 20x40.

* * *

The Yorkshire East Riding D.T.L. Championship was shot for at Londesborough Park (by kind permission of Dr. Richard Ashwin) on June 11. A heavy shower mid-way in the proceedings caused a loss of time; otherwise the weather was kind and conditions good. There were 18 entries for the championship, which was shot over 50 birds in two stages, points scoring, and results were as follows:

Open Championship (The Kenneth Thelwall Challenge Cup) and the Residential Championship (I.C.I. Plaque and medal) C. R. Booth (Beverley) 48 kills, 92x100 points. Special prize for best Novice (I.C.I. tankard) P. Turner (Skirlaugh), 40 kills, 79x100 points. Stage winners (cash prizes). Stage 1, Class A: 1 (equal): W. J. Sable (Leeds) and A. Poskitt (Doncaster); 3, C. R. Booth (Beverley). Class B: 1, J. Hall (Acklam); 2 (equal), M. Beal (Pocklington) and P. Turner (Skirlaugh). Stage 2, Class A: 1 (equal), C. R. Booth and G. Poskitt (Doncaster); 3 (equal), L. T. Field (Newbald) and R. Wilkinson (Helperby). Class B: 1, J. Webster (Kexby); 2 (equal), P. Turner (Skirlaugh) and J. Guthrie (Beverley).

Other events. 10-bird D.T.L. sweepstake: 1, T. Swift (Londesborough); 2, L. T. Field (Newbald); 3, W. J. Sable (Leeds). Sporting: 2 singles and 2 pairs driven pheasants: 1, O. Barley (Wetherby); 2, R. Wilkinson (Helperby); 3, J. Webster (Kexby).

At the close of the meeting the prizes were presented by Mrs. L. T. Field, of Newbald, and the organiser Mr. T. Swift, of Londesborough, congratulated the winners and thanked all who had helped with the arrangements. As a result of this shoot, the sum of £11 10s. will be devoted to the Londesborough Village Amenities Fund and the Church Repair Fund.

* * *

Bisley Gun Club. The entries for the Readhead Trophy shoot at Bisley on June 5 suffered as a result of the Down-the-Line Championship shoot which had been held on the two previous days, and there were only 17 guns to shoot through the programme. Competition was very keen however, and there were six "up on handicap" when the final figues were totted up. One of these, H. B. Readings, had already left, and the remaining five shot a 25-bird shoot to decide the holder of the trophy for the year. The lucky man was R. Walker, who is a very consistent shot at Bisley, and three of the others, J. Dutton, G. Hickman and T. G. Dennett still tied for second and third places—H. W. Tidd having shot himself out of the tie. A further 25 birds still left a deadlock, so the three competitors agreed to add and divide the prize money. H. W. Tidd was a clear winner of the High Gun class with 94 points, and second and third places were taken by J. A. Baigent and H. B. Readings. In the sweepstake which followed the main event, A. J. Syms took first prize with R. Walker a very good second.

In the absence of the donor of the Cup, Mrs. Northover kindly presented the very handsome trophy to Mr. Walker, who received a very cordial reception on his win, and the other prizes as listed above, and on the call of the secretary, the usual three cheers and "Whisper" were accorded to Mrs. Northover for carrying out this little duty.

(Several reports are, perforce, held over till next week.)

The Young Shot

(Continued from page 413)

W.1, will be pleased to supply full details and I advise an early application for entries, since this is bound to be a popular competition. It also provides an excellent opportunity for instruction in gun handling and safety measures by qualified instructors.

Finally, here is the last word on "that trap," and I quote the letter from Mr. P. D. Lishman of Birmingham, referring to his two drawings which illustrates this article.

"The trap is set as shown in Figure 1, by raising the cover C, pulling the string tight and placing the broad end of the detent peg G under the heads of the screws. The platform F is raised and the wire loop placed lightly on the point of G. Rats can enter the trap by climbing over the wall into the box A. Presently a rat will walk on the raised or tilted platform F, causing it to move downward so as to remove the wire loop from G. The pull of the string, due to the weight of C, pulls G upward and outward off the screw heads, so freeing C which drops to close the box.

"I have added a stop peg to the top of D in order to limit the downward fall of C so that it does not drop right on top of the rat(s) but merely closes the box A. Rats will be caught alive. I have also added bricks or weights on top of C to speed the operation of the trap and also prevent possible lifting of C by trapped rats."

A Fowling Clergyman

(Continued from page 412)

a charge of gunpowder with certainty, which could be easily primed and used, and which could be secured against damp and accidental discharge. To achieve this purpose a very different construction of the percussion part of the lock was required to that when inflammation alone was the object. Forsyth found that making sketches on paper served his purpose until the effects were ascertained when steel was used.

The London workmen employed at the Tower neither knew nor understood the nature of the work on which they were engaged, and even when he had overcome their unforeseen prejudices Forsyth had yet another obstacle in his way.

He had preferred detonating mercury for several reasons, mainly because it was clearer than any of the other detonating powders then made. However, as all the parts of the percussion lock required to be made with great accuracy, to produce the desired effect, he found that the detonating mercury could not always be made to the same degree of strength, and, even when weakest, after being inflamed, it always burst or swelled the part of the lock which contained it.

Forsyth had to compound a new detonating priming powder to answer his purpose, but this was attended with considerable danger. Compounding and experimenting with such powders was not too well understood then by chemists and several men had been severely burned by explosions. They refused to make such preparations in any quantity for him, so Forsyth had to compound his own powders.

This difficulty was overcome and a lock, the principle of which was approved by the Master-General, was applied to a carbine, and another of the same construction to a three-pounder. Although the working of the mechanical part was not yet perfect, as the principle was new and duly approved, it was to be left to the Ordnance for consideration as to value, and it was decided that Dr. Forsyth could return to his manse as soon as his remuneration had been settled.

Told to Remove His Rubbish

Lord Moira proposed Forsyth should be paid an amount equal to the financial economies effected through the saving of gunpowder over a number of years through the use of the clergyman's device. As the sum which might be saved had not been ascertained Forsyth suggested a period of two years would be sufficient. Whilst various experiments with many types of firearms were nearly completed, and financial arrangements were well advanced, the Government was suddenly changed, and Lord Moira left the Ordnance Office.

Lord Chatham, the new Master-General, sent Dr. Forsyth a message intimating that his services were no longer required, and ordered him to render his account for the expenses incurred whilst employed with the previous Master-General of Ordnance. Next came an order from the Board of Ordnance, with whom Forsyth had had no previous communication, telling him to deliver up any goods of that department in his possession and to remove from the Tower and elsewhere the "rubbish" he had left.

The brutal order was obeyed immediately. The despised "rubbish" consisted of ingenious applications of the percussion principle which ultimately were incorporated in the firearms of British and other nations.

Dr. Forsyth returned to his home after staying in London for more than a year, but the ill treatment by the Government did not ruffle his temper, and he cheerfully and uncomplainingly resumed his old pastimes and took up his parochial duties.

Although Forsyth registered his inventions the patents were pirated and effectively used in some parts of Europe. When, many years after Forsyth's return from London, some of his friends learned that the British Government were introducing the percussion lock into the army, they persuaded the clergyman to draw up a statement and to renew his claim for recompense.

Forsyth's kinsman, Lord Brougham, and other political friends agitated on behalf of the inventor and eventually the Government agreed to make some form of acknowledgement of his invention which, through the prejudice of certain officials, had not been adopted in England during the many years it had been used and appreciated in other countries.

This tardy recompense, although received by the relatives of the inventor, arrived too late for the benefit of the clergyman. Before the first instalment reached the manse, Forsyth had died.

Pheasants and Foxes

(Continued from page 410)

was added to the bag by lunch time, although once or twice the dogs got on a hot scent which seemed to fizzle out suddenly. Probably birds which had been disturbed and flown.

Our friend was at the cars when we got back, so we all lunched together, and how much better today tasted the mince pies and Christmas cake after a morning's exercise, than they did yesterday. It was in a spirit of optimism that our little party made its way to the ten-acre wood. The wood has excellent possibilities for game being carpeted with a nice, warm bed of bracken and bramble, with good oak at reasonable spacing. Nice shelter, but not too thick to shoot in. We decided to take it in three beats, doing the boundary side first. In the thick bracken it was the young dog which was doing the hunting, as after the morning's exertions, old Simon's weight was beginning to tell, and he was content to walk sedately to heel.

We were soon in action, for my friend on the right flank almost trod on a cock pheasant, which flew back over him, nearly knocking off his hat in the process. Startled and flustered, he missed clean with both barrels, and got his leg pulled thoroughly for it. At the reports, five hen pheasants took alarm and rose a good hundred yards ahead. Four of them we saw leave the cover, but one appeared to drop just inside. I was amazed to find so many pheasants and we confidently looked forward to making quite a bag. Sure enough in the scrub at the end of the first beat Squib flushed the hen and I brought her down, making the total up to four pheasants.

Just then we heard the music of the hounds, and looking towards the main road about three fields away, we saw a long line of parked cars. The North were drawing our neighbour's covert. It was soon evident that they had found and we saw them stream away out of the wood and across the road. "Here's Charlie," my army friend cried, and sure enough he was crossing the plough and coming our way. On he came through the fence and within a few feet of us before he saw us and then away like a streak through our covert. He was a big dog, bedraggled and muddy. Through the kale and across the plough came the pack in full cry. I slipped the lead on the two labradors and we stood back.

Halloa from the Road

In a moment they were through the fence and all round us. A cast or two and a big hound put up his head and gave tongue and away through the wood they went. Up came the Hunt and at the same time an halloa was heard from the road. The huntsman heard and was about to call off his hounds, but we told him to leave them as they were right on Charlie's brush, and sure enough, we had a view of him as he came back up the field on the far side of our covert with the pack not two hundred yards behind him. The rest of the hunt had come up by this time, and our quiet little wood was bedlam for a few minutes. We had heard pheasants getting up as the hounds had faced through and ruefully thought "thats the end of our sport for today." Anyhow, we had had a grandstand view of the hunt.

After all had gone quiet, we walked the centre of the covert, rather aimlessly I am afraid, thinking there was no chance of further sport. We were wrong however, as we saw Squib freeze at a patch of bracken. Into it he dived and there was a fine old scuffle and for one awful moment I thought the the hen pheasant would have the indignity of being brought to hand without being fired at. However, she finally rose and was brought down by the gun on the left. A little later my other friend killed a hare with a neat snap shot as she twisted through the bracken. I took a poor view of this latter addition to the bag, as I was the only one of the party with a game-bag. We finished the wood out without further sport, all feeling very satisfied with our little bag. The officers' mess would have pheasant on the menu after all.

Driving home, I met some of the hunt returning, muddy and weary. They had had a good hunt, but the fox had beaten them and gone to earth—where they had left him. Good sportsmen these.

When I reached home, I found the household bubbling over with excitement; they could hardly wait to tell me. The South had found a fox in the kale a couple of fields away, and run him, in full view of the house, through our marsh, up our dell, down the drive and across the road. They seemed to have been a most well-behaved pack, for they had not put a foot on the herbaceous borders, had leaped the rockery if you please—not crashed through it—and kept to the paths the whole time. Well trained, eh!

We learned afterwards that they had run their fox across country for about four miles, when he had doubled back on his tracks and made for home. The pack had stuck to him and run him down in the stable yard of The Grange within two hundred yards of our house, and little more from where he started. This was obviously the old dog fox that my two labradors had privately hunted on Christmas Eve.

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THE BIRMINGHAM GUN CLUB announce Open Sporting Event, 50 "Birds"; Worcestershire D.T.L. Championship, 50 "Birds," at Brockhill, Hewell, Nr. Redditch, July 2nd, 1955, commencing 11 a.m.; good cash prizes.—Details from A. E. Johnson, 33 Alcester Street, Redditch.

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AMERICAN magazine subscriptions. One year American Rifleman, 43/-; Field and Stream, 28/6; Outdoor Life, 28/6; Guns, 35/-. Free booklet quoting others. Willen Ltd. (Dept. W), 101 Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.

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The Shooting Times & Country Magazine, with which is incorporated the British Sportsman, is published every Friday, price 1s. 3d., by The Burlington Publishing Company (1942) Ltd., 29 Old Bond Street, London, W.1. Printed by Bournemouth Times Ltd., Branksome, Bournemouth. Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper and for Canadian Magazine Post.

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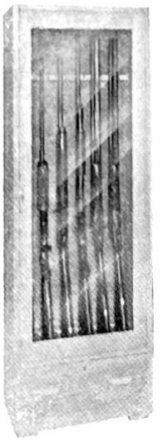

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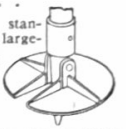

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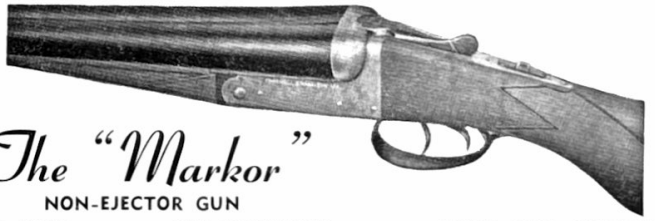

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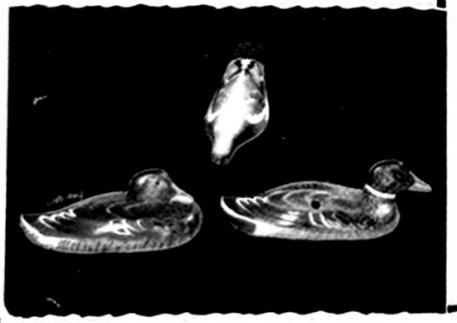

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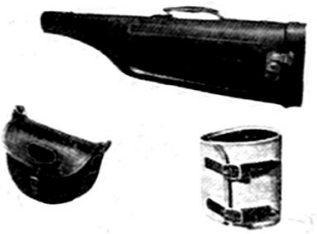

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